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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0419  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 9051  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 4587  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT IMMEDIATE 1176  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR IMMEDIATE 3625  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI IMMEDIATE 0101

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 002987

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [CH](#) [IN](#) [IR](#) [MG](#) [PK](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: IRANIAN SCO MEMBERSHIP LOOKS UNLIKELY, SAY  
CONTACTS IN BEIJING

REF: STATE 82513

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Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson for reasons  
1.4 (B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Sources at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Secretariat, Chinese MFA and Russian Embassy told PolOff separately that it is unlikely Iran will join the SCO in the near future. Rather than adding new members, the SCO intends to have "dialogue partners" to promote cooperation on specific issues with other countries and organizations. Concerning Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, the Chinese MFA said China shares the U.S. goal of stability and security in Central Asia and would not support any statement at the upcoming SCO summit that runs counter to that goal or "which is aimed at a third party." End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) PolOff delivered reftel points to MFA Department of European and Central Asian Affairs SCO Division Deputy Director Mao Wenchong and to SCO Secretariat Senior Expert Umid Azizov on August 1, urging China and the SCO Secretariat to refrain from supporting any statement calling for the closure of the Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan and to oppose Iran's attempt to upgrade from observer to member status. PolOff also discussed the upcoming SCO summit with SCO Secretary General Bolat Nurgaliyev on July 30 and with Russian EmbOff Denis Agafonov on July 24.

Iranian Membership in SCO Unlikely  
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[1](#)3. (C) MFA's Mao said China welcomes cooperation with SCO observer states, including Iran. However, he added, the SCO has not worked out a process for admitting new members and SCO members do not want to admit observer states that would "bring their problems and conflicts into the SCO." He pointed out that Iran and other observer states have the right to take part in SCO meetings and express their views but do not enjoy any decision-making authority in the SCO. Mao added that the views of observer states do not necessarily reflect the views of SCO members.

[1](#)4. (C) SCO Secretary General Nurgaliyev downplayed the possibility of SCO expansion. He said the SCO plans to set up an expert working group to work out criteria for new

members, but added that the SCO has not seriously discussed extending membership to any new states. SCO Secretariat Senior Expert Azizov seconded this view, although he mentioned that Tajikistan, as the summit host and supporter of Iranian membership, might attempt to get the issue of Iranian membership onto the summit agenda. In spite of Iran and Pakistan's interest in becoming members, both Nurgaliyev and Azizov said, the SCO is not prepared to admit new members until the existing member states have resolved major differences and improved cooperation. While admitting that the possibility of SCO expansion "cannot be excluded," Nurgaliyev said that the organization would have to be convinced that the pluses of a new member outweigh the minuses, a situation he calls "very unlikely" in the next couple years.

15. (C) Our Russian Embassy contact was also skeptical of Iranian membership. Agafonov told PolOff that Iranian membership in SCO is "hard to imagine" and "definitely would not happen" at the SCO Summit in Dushanbe in August. In his view, if Iran were to join, there would be pressure to admit India and Pakistan. The SCO cannot afford to have two member states with such serious disputes as exist between India and Pakistan.

Manas Air Base

16. (C) Concerning possible SCO statements about the Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, MFA's Mao said that China would not support any statements "aimed at a third party" or "departing from" our shared goal of peace, stability and economic development in Afghanistan. SCO's Azizov stated that the SCO secretariat is currently working on a draft summit declaration but declined to comment on whether or not the

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draft contains language about "foreign forces" in Central Asia.

SCO Wants Dialogue Partners, Not New Members

17. (C) SCO's Nurgaliyev announced at a press conference on July 30 that the SCO will create a "dialogue partner" status for countries and organizations seeking greater cooperation with the SCO. This status will allow countries and organizations that "share the aims of the SCO" to cooperate more closely with SCO member states. Nurgaliyev told PolOff that the SCO does not have any particular country in mind for dialogue partner status but mentioned that a country seeking cooperation on a particular issue, such as energy, could apply for this status. MFA's Mao mentioned Turkmenistan and Afghanistan as possible SCO dialogue partners and said China would "welcome" U.S. interest in acquiring dialogue partner status.

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